

Payment of Deeds

Through cloud and sunbeam the
broken black galleon weaves a worried rune in
frigid polar water.

Its crew exhausted, its Admiral at bay...
With what? you ask. Indeed the Admiral makes labor on scrolls,
a mortified writing with reverence and fear,
anger and tear
— parchment of flame, for the archive.

For you see the Admiral's so well-masted ship (though mighty it was) has
tasted cold malice, malevolent cause.

And this is the story:

On starlit passage through Mariner's lanes, a
vessel was sighted much like his own, but
larger and ghostly with pale sails tattered and
decks designed with baroque hallowed portals lined
with legionist cannons of gold.

Black-robed figures stood the decks of
said ship, and they didn't move at all, layered
elder in fashion with silk very smoky, and thin platinum bands
on their arms here and there.

When the dread vessel was close it was clear to all
that its figures in robes weren't beings at all,
but skeletons.

(More)

And not women or men, no, nothing so normal:
Its crew were dead animals, bipedal creatures
of dream and dark.

Animal skulls, animal ribs, each standing tall in
shadows and gloom.

And their vessel malignant, veered to intercept course.

The Admiral knew no power to flee, no power to
challenge with spirit or weapon.

And the animal rig made arcing collision, ripping
souls and timber from the Admiral's world, with
shattered beams of minds and food
cut into water and air.

Lives were lost to panic and sea. with barrels of rum
dashed to fire, they say

And now:

On the Admiral's mind came the weight of grey guilt.
Yes, *he* was the cause, or so he assumes.
He felt for sure that the animal boat was
sent as wrath from deities various, embarked to himself
for blasphemous speech, with too far his wines, too far his sins,
from which he'd been warned by omens within.
More than once.

Soon the Admiral will live in a home for the sick and the failed
and even the vanished. Some on the streets will pass his windows
and they'll all generally say,
*"Beware to all, and watch how ye step, for
witness ye now a once kingly type, felled
by a madness divine."*